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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower  
Developments in Indochina*

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**Recent Communist Logistical  
and Manpower Developments  
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North Vietnam is extensively streamlining its rear services organization. The changes, which are taking place in southern Laos and probably in other contiguous areas, are evidence that Hanoi does not intend to dismantle the Ho Chi Minh Trail apparatus. Rather the North Vietnamese are molding a system capable of handling military logistical needs in a more efficient manner, compatible with the bomb-free environment which now exists in southern Laos.

Meanwhile, heavy resupply activity continues to be noted throughout most of Indochina.

- A logistical element near Dong Hoi recently reported it had dispatched 11,000 tons of foodstuffs to the south over an unspecified time period.
- Hundreds of vehicles are moving in South Vietnam's Military Region 1, carrying ordnance and other supplies. Elsewhere in South Vietnam, the pace of activity remained brisk.
- In southern Laos and Cambodia the dry season transportation campaign continues, as vehicles are apparently moving all types of supplies to South Vietnam.

On the manpower side, the reduction in overall infiltration starts continued last week. About 200 special-purpose personnel entered the infiltration system in North Vietnam. Most of the 35,000 infiltrators in the pipeline since 28 January have now arrived at their destinations. In other developments:

- An antiaircraft regiment recently deployed from Quang Tri Province into southern Laos as part of a continuing buildup of antiaircraft forces in the southern Panhandle and northeastern Cambodia areas.
- The headquarters of the 377th Air Defense Division -- probably the senior controlling authority for air defense forces in northern South Vietnam and southern Laos -- has recently been confirmed in the Khe Sanh area of Quang Tri Province.

Note: Comments and queries regarding this publication are welcomed. They may be directed to [redacted] of the Office of Economic Research, [redacted]  
[redacted]

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## DISCUSSION

## Recent Communist Logistical Developments in Indochina

*North Vietnam*

1. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Hanoi has continued to rebuild and augment its internal lines of communication and its transportation links with China. Perhaps most significant, the new petroleum pipeline from the Hon Gay area to Niu-tou, China, is clearly operational. Two small vessels were noted operating at the Niu-tou transfer pier presumably putting fuel into the system. The North Vietnamese may have the capability to move petroleum from the Chinese port all the way through North Vietnam and into southern Laos and South Vietnam by pipeline. Once the Haiphong port becomes fully operational, however, most of North Vietnam's petroleum imports probably will be delivered there, and the pipeline to China presumably will be maintained only for emergency use.

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2. Much of North Vietnam's rail system was cloud-covered when photographed [REDACTED] but those portions observed showed the system to have been restored to generally good condition but sustaining only a moderate level of activity. Activity at P'ing-hsiang, China (adjacent to the North Vietnamese border), appeared substantially below the high levels of the last half of 1972 and below the average of the past three years. Reconstruction in the main yard there appeared to be complete, however, and a new rail spur serving the petroleum storage area has been constructed since January. No new military equipment was identified along the entire Sino-Soviet-North Vietnamese rail link. The SA-3 missile canister stockpile noted in storage at Dong Dang in late January had been drawn down by about 40 canisters, leaving an estimated 110. The 40 presumably have been moved south.

3. There is some sketchy collateral information indicating that North Vietnam has received military aid since the South Vietnam cease-fire was signed on 28 January. [REDACTED] at Nan-ning, in southern China, significant quantities of food and weapons on trucks moving to Hanoi. Adding to the evidence, [REDACTED]

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that "large quantities" of military supplies have been trucked into North Vietnam from China since the cease-fire. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] the roads in North Vietnam were "crowded with Chinese trucks driven by Chinese personnel, carrying large quantities of munitions and supplies."

4. Meanwhile, significant logistic activity continues to be detected in southern North Vietnam. At Binh Tram 18 in the Vinh area, some supplies continue to move both west and south, although the primary emphasis is on westbound deliveries to northern Laos. During the period 23-28 March, more than 300 tons of supplies, mostly foodstuffs but including about 20 tons of ammunition were detected moving there. Detections of southbound activity included the dispatch on 25 March of 43 vehicles to Ben Thuy, a transshipment point for cargo headed toward Laos.

5. Farther south, extremely heavy supply deliveries have been noted through Binh Tram 26, near Dong Hoi. Between 25 and 31 March, COMINT detected some 200 vehicles transiting vehicle checkpoints in the Dong Hoi area as well as quantities of rice, weapons, and ammunition being offloaded from barges for transshipment. Although bad weather has caused some muddy roads, heavy vehicle activity has apparently not been seriously impeded. To accommodate future activity in the area, a new warehouse is under construction which will hold more than 1,000 tons of rice. On 28 March, elements of the binh tram reported that more than 11,000 tons of rice had been delivered to Binh Tram 14 and another unidentified element. About 1,000 tons of rice and military equipment (about one-half each) remained in storage. Although no period was specified for the deliveries, that quantity is adequate to satisfy requirements for rice from North Vietnam of troops in southern Laos and northern South Vietnam for three to four months.

#### *Northern Laos*

6. Fragmentary evidence during the past several weeks has indicated a continuing resupply effort in northern Laos, particularly in the Plaine des Jarres region. On 13 March, for example, an aerial observer estimated that 75 cargo trucks and 20 armored personnel carriers were moving southwesterly across the Plaine. More recently, aerial photography [redacted] revealed more than 110 cargo vehicles moving along Route 7, the major line of communication connecting the Plaine region with supply centers in North Vietnam. The vehicles were dispersed over the stretch of road from the Laos/North Vietnam border west to Ban Ban.

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7. Other photographic evidence shows substantial road repair under way in the northern Plaine. [ ] construction of bridges and drainage ditches and road grading were observed on several major roads. COMINT has been of little help in assessing the overall level of logistic activity, but has sporadically revealed supplies – including small amounts of ammunition – moving to forward elements on the western Plaine.

8. Supplies also continue to move in Luang Prabang Province. Sporadic reporting from Binh Tram 24 in the Nam Ou River area has indicated the continuing receipt of cargo. Generally, rice and assorted foodstuffs have been involved, but on several occasions the binh tram has been observed dispatching ammunition to its subordinate units. On 17 March it was reportedly preparing to receive 15 tons of ammunition at a newly relocated ammunition storage depot.

#### *Southern Laos and Cambodia*

9. Heavy vehicle activity continues to be noted moving through the Laotian Panhandle and eastern Cambodia. Southbound activity [ ] on the input roads to Laos jumped almost 50% during the last 10 days of March, compared with the period 5-21 March. The recent southbound surge probably represents new supplies entering the Laotian system.

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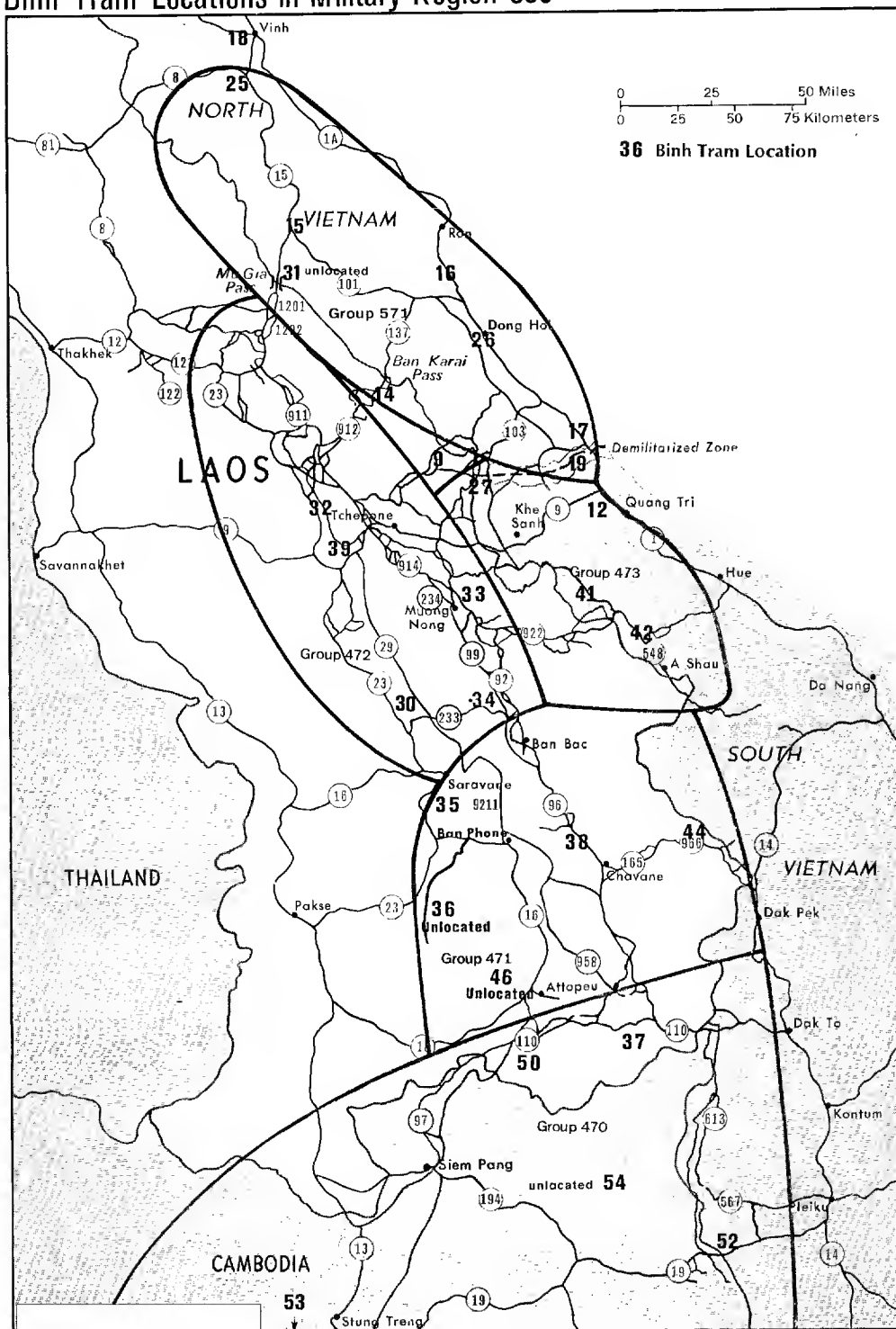
10. In the central Laotian Panhandle, one element reported on 26 March that it had received 42 vehicles and dispatched 71 vehicles, the latter probably carrying supplies to Group 471. Binh Tram 34 was noted dispatching vehicles both south to Group 471 and east on Route 922 toward South Vietnam's Military Region (MR) 1. Tanks and artillery were again noted in the central Panhandle this week. Photography [ ] revealed 12 T-54 tanks parked along roads just northwest of Chavane. The tanks are stragglers from groups previously detected moving through the Panhandle. COMINT revealed on 30 March that possibly 20 122-mm artillery pieces were moving in Binh Tram 34's area of operations.

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11. Heavy vehicle movements have also been detected in the Group 471 area. A recently available intercept of 22 March, for example, referenced nearly 200 vehicles moving between storage facilities there. Since then, on 29 March, an element of Group 471 reported that 88 vehicles were active in the southern Panhandle. Aerial observers flying over southern Laos report that the main roads there are in generally good condition. Photography indicates that Routes 9211 and 958 are carrying heavy traffic into the extreme southern Panhandle, as is the new road which runs across

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## Binh Tram Locations in Military Region 559



Note: As indicated in the memorandum the North Vietnamese logistical network in MR 559 is currently undergoing a major reorganization. This map does not reflect such changes, and is intended only as a reference to the various binh trams' areas of operation prior to the recent changes. New maps will be prepared when our information on the new organization warrants.



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the Bolovens Plateau and connects with Route 975 near Siem Pang, Cambodia. Although this road has been referred to in COMINT throughout the dry season, the southern portion has just recently been confirmed in photography.

12. As Binh Tram 37 expressed the situation in the Group 470 area, "the amount of cargo being transferred is still large." The magnitude of the effort there was shown in COMINT, which revealed that Binh Tram 37 handled almost 150 vehicles on 27 and 31 March and that 82 vehicles were headed to Binh Tram 50 on 29 March. Also according to COMINT, Binh Tram 53 "has been very active": on 31 March an element reported that the binh tram's goal of delivering 93 vehicles to an unspecified location had been fulfilled. Most of the few references to cargo being moved in the Group 470 area continue to be to foodstuffs, and it is obvious that large quantities are being moved from Cambodian sources northward to Laos. Some elements of Group 470 have also been noted preparing roads for continued use during the forthcoming rainy season.

13. Heavy US bombing remains a factor in Communist logistic operations in Group 470, forcing the binh trams in Cambodia to maintain stricter security and traffic control. Nevertheless, Group 470 reported on 31 March that "the enemy striking the bridges and roads has not influenced the units." Collateral reporting corroborates Group 470's own assessment. Upwards of 200 tactical air sorties per day are being targeted against the North Vietnamese resupply system in eastern Cambodia. Key lines of communication, truck parks, and storage areas are receiving heavy daily attacks, but there is little sign that the flow of supplies is being affected by the bombing.

14. Aerial observers report that cross-border Route 97/975 from Laos to the vicinity of Kratie is sustaining heavy vehicle traffic and is obviously replacing National Route 13 as the main thoroughfare for both northbound and southbound overland movement. Watercraft concentrations on the major rivers in the same area have also been noted. Of special interest this week was the detection of "barges" on the Tonle Kong and Mekong, indicating that larger cargoes are being moved over these routes than those usually carried by motorized sampans. An air strike against one such "large" barge some five miles north of Stung Treng on the Tonle Kong caused a large secondary explosion and large sustained fire, indicating the cargo probably contained ordnance or petroleum. Pilots reported several times this week on the high level of activity at the Stung Treng City transshipment point. The facility is being enlarged with the addition of new storage buildings. Finally, roads leading into the immediate MR 3 border region

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(Routes 13, 7, 132, and 131) showed scattered instances of continued heavy vehicle traffic, including truck and semi-trailer traffic.

*South Vietnam*

15. As has been true for the past several weeks, the heaviest sustained logistical activity in Indochina has been reflected in South Vietnam's MR 1. The focal point for activity remains Binh Tram 12 and its subordinate 65th and 770th Transportation Battalions. They appear to be receiving new cargo as well as continuing to disperse and camouflage that already on hand. On 1 April, for example, Binh Tram 12 received 30 vehicles of cargo, and these battalions delivered 84 vehicle loads of cargo to unspecified points in the Group 473 area. Ordnance constitutes a large share of the deliveries detected in Binh Tram 12 communications, and one element of the binh tram reported on 25 March that it had more than 350 tons of nearly all kinds of ordnance in storage. Subsequently, on 30 March, another storage facility reported having almost 600 tons of small arms ammunition and 340 tons of explosives on hand.

16. In western MR 1, Binh Tram 41 has been the focal point of resupply activity. Although its area of operations has not been clearly defined since it extended its control in South Vietnam, it is responsible for activity from Khe Sanh to the A Shau Valley and may retain some vestiges of control in its old area along Route 922. On 29 March a North Vietnamese element in MR 1 reported that it had received 285 tons of weapons and ammunition from vehicles subordinate to Binh Tram 41. The cargoes referenced in communications from Binh Trams 12 and 41 probably reflect both supplies moved from stockpiles already inside South Vietnam and supplies arriving from North Vietnam or Laos.

17. Recent intercepts have shown a high level of activity continuing along Route 922 into South Vietnam's MR 1. On 31 March, for example, Binh Tram 42 reported on vehicles that had departed from Laos for the B-4 Front in eastern MR 1 "up to the 29th" of March. Altogether, 690 vehicles had made the trip -- they could have delivered up to 2,800 tons of supplies during an unspecified period. Although no details of these deliveries were given, the report contained information on the storage of both food and ordnance, and it is likely that both are being shipped. A series of vehicle command stations is being organized along Route 922 to monitor vehicle activity along that important supply corridor into MR 1.

18. In southern MR 1, [ ] continued movements of supplies from the Laos border to Viet Cong units in the

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coastal lowlands; reportedly, small deliveries of rocket and mortar shells and small arms to the Viet Cong in northern Quang Nam continued through February and are expected to continue in the future. The Communists are also continuing road and bridge construction in northern Quang Ngai Province. According to a rallier, they intend to use the new road from Laotian Route 966 to the coast -- designated Route 105 by the Communists -- to move ammunition and weapons down to the lowlands of both Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces.

19. In MR 2, reports from Group 470 elements in the B-3 Front during the past month have disclosed the development of an extensive storage area network in the Kontum/Pleiku area. In all, 12 new storage facilities have been identified there. The NVA 593rd Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment recently redeployed to the B-3 Front, and part of its mission may be to protect these important storage facilities.

20. In southern South Vietnam, Communist forces were briefed in early March on COSVN orders emphasizing Communist control of areas surrounding major supply lines into MRs 3 and 4. Recent fighting at South Vietnam's Tonle Cham outpost on the Saigon River may reflect Communist efforts to implement this strategy. Meanwhile, Communist resupply into northern MR 3 continues unabated, as both troops and civilians have been used since mid-March to move munitions and rice stockpiled near Mimot, Cambodia, into Binh Long Province of MR 3.

North Vietnam is continuing to infiltrate troops and modern weapons, such as heavy mortars, missiles, and antiaircraft radar into South Vietnam, and that the transportation of goods purchased in Cambodia into northern Binh Long Province had recently increased.

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### *Regional Developments: Organization and Communications*

#### *Logistics Reorganization*

21. There have been signs of a major reorganization of the North Vietnamese rear services apparatus for several weeks, but only in the past week has a definite pattern clearly emerged. Previously, we noted that:

- Binh Tram 28, near Khe Sanh, had been redesignated the 28th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment;
- Binh Tram 29 (whose role west of the DMZ was never clear) had become the 29th Engineer Regiment;

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- Binh Tram 47, near the Bolovens, was redesignated the 59th Infantry Regiment; and
- Binh Tram 33 (near Muong Nong) had been disbanded as an effective binh tram when all of its subordinate units were resubordinated to other commands.

22. A recent rallier report places these changes in perspective (and his reporting has been partly corroborated by COMINT). The rallier reported that all of the subordinates of Group 471 have been reorganized into regiments, each performing a single function, as follows<sup>1</sup>:

Formerly	Now
Binh Tram 35	35th Truck Transportation Regiment
Binh Tram 36	36th Engineer Regiment
Binh Tram 46	46th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
Binh Tram 47	47th Infantry Regiment (also referenced as the 59th Regiment)

As part of the reorganization, all truck transportation battalions in the area were resubordinated to the new 35th Regiment, all antiaircraft artillery battalions to the 46th Regiment, and so on.

23. Recent COMINT provides further evidence of such a reorganization. For one thing, MR 559's communications-liaison system and infiltration operations have been realigned. In late January the NVA 574th Communications-Liaison Regiment was established in the Group 471 area, and recently a communications-liaison regiment (probably the 572nd) has been established in the Group 472 area. All binh trams of Groups 471 and 472 relinquished communications-liaison responsibilities which were completely vested in the 572nd and 574th Regiments. The developments at Binh Tram 33 mentioned above have been followed by a series of developments at Binh Tram 42 which suggest that neither is now

1. The rallier did not mention all of the identified subordinates of Group 471, but mentioned some additional binh trams subordinate to Groups 472 and 473.

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functioning as a regular binh tram - each may be scheduled to assume a regional control over one aspect of logistical operations, or may be disbanded. In the same general area, Binh Tram 34 has been redesignated the 34th Engineer Regiment. Finally, on 30 March it became apparent that some additional change may be in the wind for Binh Tram 41 which has just recently expanded its operations in Quang Tri Province: on that day an order was given to "organize all of Binh Tram 41 for a troop movement immediately."

24. We do not have any firm indications of why Hanoi has undertaken these steps. However, if all of MR 559 evolves along these lines, the consolidation could mean that instead of having one engineer battalion at each of about 15 binh trams conducting operations in southern Laos, only two or three regional engineer commands would be required. The same is true for antiaircraft protection, communications-liaison responsibilities, and the other functions carried out independently in the past by virtually every binh tram in the network. The new system could ease command and control problems and lessen manpower requirements significantly, while permitting a high level of logistical movement if required. Such a reorganization seems manifestly logical at this time. If the North Vietnamese wish to take full advantage of a bomb-free environment, there is no need to have a large number of logistic way stations (binh trams) spread out along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Cargo no longer needs to be shuttled short distances then hidden to prevent its loss to air attack. A much less costly and time-consuming method of moving supplies south is to load them on a truck in North Vietnam and ship them directly to their final destination.

#### *Communications*

25. During the past week there have been numerous indications that improvements in North Vietnam's communications system are under way. Better, more convenient, and probably more secure modes of communication are being provided to Communist forces. The change may portend a significant degradation of our COMINT collection effort.

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27. The North Vietnamese are also upgrading their communications facilities in MR 1. A wireline communications center or switching facility may have been established in the Dong Ha area, and landline links apparently exist to Binh Linh, Gio Linh, Cua Viet, Cam Lo, Khe Sanh, and Ba Long -- all in Quang Tri Province. Although some difficulties have been experienced in maintaining this system, it should provide significantly improved communications between Hanoi and Communist elements in northern South Vietnam.

#### Recent Manpower Developments in Indochina

##### *Personnel Infiltration*

28. The reduction in overall infiltration starts from North Vietnam continued this week. During the reporting period, a total of five special-purpose infiltration groups with an aggregate strength of about 200 men were detected entering the pipeline in North Vietnam. In addition to these five groups, 15 other special-purpose groups were initially detected farther south in the system. The first tabulation below shows the pattern of starts of regular groups since 1 September, for both the 1971/72 and 1972/73 dry seasons. The second tabulation depicts estimated starts of regular and special-purpose infiltration groups, by week, since 1 January. The estimates should be viewed as "soft" because precise data on the date of departure of many of the groups are not available.

Destination	Infiltration Starts by Season	
	1 Sep 71 - 1 Apr 72	1 Sep 72 - 1 Apr 73
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,500</b>	<b>86,500</b>
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	15,500	26,000
MR 5	17,500	9,000
B-3 Front	23,000	14,000
COSVN	32,500	26,500
Southern Laos/MR 559	9,000	11,000

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# Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

## South Vietnam

### Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA<sup>1</sup>RVNAF<sup>2</sup>

153,000

287,000

VC/NVA

RVNAF

76,000

85,000

325th

VNMC

324B

Airborne

320B

1st

312th

2nd

304th

3rd

711th

Regional

2nd

Forces

VC/NVA

RVNAF

25,000

57,000

320th

23rd

10th

22nd

3rd

Regional

Forces

VC/NVA

RVNAF

26,000

67,000

429th Sapper

25th

Command

18th

9th

5th

7th

Regional

Forces

VC/NVA

RVNAF

26,000

78,000

5th

21st

1st

9th

7th

44th Special

Tactical Zone

Regional Forces





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**Number of Personnel  
Entering the Pipeline  
Since 1 Jan 1973**

	Total <sup>1</sup>	Special-Purpose
1-7 Jan	4,500	200
8-14	3,500	150
15-21	6,000	400
22-28	4,000	150
29-4 Feb	6,000	100
5-11	3,000	150
12-18	2,000	850
19-25	200	200
26-4 Mar	700	700
5-11	1,300	300
12-18	50	50
19-25	500	500
26-1 Apr	200	200

1. Including gap-filled groups, except Groups 7001 through 7009. If it is assumed that these groups departed between 15 February and 10 March, some 4,500 combat troops would be spread over the departures estimated for those weeks.

29. Most of the 35,000 infiltrators transiting the system since 28 January have arrived at their destinations. A significant proportion of the groups which started south since early this year have traveled by vehicle. As a result, many of the personnel in the pipeline arrived at their destinations appreciably sooner than they would have otherwise.

***Manpower Developments in South Vietnam***

30. Recent COMINT and collateral evidence indicates the presence of the 52B Regiment of the 320B Division in Quang Tri Province. The regiment reportedly was to have replaced one of its two sister regiments -- the 48B -- near the Cua Viet River in early March, which was scheduled to withdraw just north of the DMZ to refit. Neither the 48B nor the division's third regiment -- the 64B -- have been located since mid-February 1973 and possibly may have returned to the north. The division headquarters, however, was last fixed on 20 March in the vicinity of the western DMZ.

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31. [ ] continuing Viet Cong recruiting in South Vietnam's MR 3. The purpose of the recruiting reportedly is to establish a VC district local force battalion which would take part in offensive operations in Hau Nghia Province commencing in early April. Each village was ordered to recruit 40 young men between the ages of 18 and 20. As of 18 March, a 15-day military and political training course reportedly was under way for those recruits earmarked for the new battalion. Although several reports of recruiting in MR 3 have surfaced since the beginning of the cease-fire, little information has come to light on recruiting in the rest of South Vietnam.

#### *Manpower Developments in Laos*

32. Recent evidence indicates that the North Vietnamese have formed a new combat regiment in southern Laos. A number of intercepted messages have referenced a 52nd Infantry Regiment in Saravane Province, with about 750 men in two subordinate battalions. Although the origin of the unit is still unclear, at least two of its three battalions may have been previously subordinate to the 968th Infantry Division. Infiltrators and/or personnel subordinate to binh trams of the NVA MR 559 logistics system, however, also could have been used to fill out the remainder of the regiment. The establishment of the unit in the southern portion of the Laotian Panhandle has been undertaken simultaneously with the reorganization of the North Vietnamese logistics system now under way in southern Laos (see paragraphs 21-24).

#### *Status of North Vietnamese Air Defense Units*

33. Another antiaircraft regiment now has been confirmed as having moved from the Hanoi area to Quang Binh Province during the week immediately prior to the cease-fire, bringing the number of antiaircraft regiments in southern North Vietnam, northern South Vietnam, and southern Laos to 29 (nine in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam; 12 in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam<sup>2</sup>; and eight in the Panhandle of Laos), representing approximately 60% of North Vietnam's total antiaircraft forces. These 29 regiments with 115 battalions reflect a significant increase over the previous high observed in May 1972, when elements of 25 antiaircraft regiments with 86 battalions were active in these areas.

2. In addition to these 29 regiments of the North Vietnamese Air Defense Command, there are three General Directorate of Rear Services antiaircraft support regiments in South Vietnam - two in Quang Tri Province of MR 1 and one in Kontum Province of MR 2.

34. Recent evidence indicates that the NVA 232nd Antiaircraft Regiment moved from Quang Tri Province into the southern portion of the Laotian Panhandle, probably as early as the first week in March. Although the purpose of the unit's move and its final destination are unclear, there have been continuing indications of a Communist buildup of antiaircraft defenses in the southern Laos/northeastern Cambodia area. Since early January 1973, at least five other antiaircraft regiments have been noted shifting their areas of operations farther southward in the Panhandle, and one of these recently moved farther on into southwestern Kontum Province of South Vietnam.

35. In other developments, the headquarters of the NVA 377th Air Defense Division was recently confirmed by direction finding in the Khe Sanh area of northern South Vietnam. Although the unit was last located in Quang Binh Province on 24 January 1973, additional evidence from COMINT suggests that the headquarters and its support elements had deployed into Quang Tri Province before the cease-fire date. The 377th Division almost certainly is the senior controlling authority for all the antiaircraft regiments in that province as well as in southern Laos. Moreover, COMINT during the past week also confirmed the presence of all five battalions of the previously reported NVA 263rd SAM Regiment in the Khe Sanh area where at least three SAM sites were occupied at the end of March.

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